

September 27, 2015

HACKETT MIDDLE SCHOOL

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TEAM (CET)

“MINORITY REPORT” TO RECOMMENDATIONS

The decision-making process for the CET allowed for a “Minority Report” made up of responses, comments, additional recommendations from individuals on the CET. This document lists all such comments by individual members:

From: Anne Erling <erling.colafati@verizon.net>

Establish a clear educational vision for Hackett that articulates the broad skills and knowledge students will develop at Hackett and what mastery of those competencies looks like.* Compose this list in consultation with high school standards to ensure that the years at Hackett prepare students for excellence at the high school level. Align class work and homework with this vision to ensure that students get ample practice developing their skills and knowledge in these areas, and that assignments target development of as many of these academic goals as possible. Publicize this vision to the entire Hackett community to clarify for all a path towards excellence.

*[I'm thinking of things like:

- Communicate clearly so as to leave no confusion about what you mean.
- Compute accurately (-- and maybe even visualize mathematical equations)
- Ask pertinent questions that move a discussion or investigation along.
- Identify an author's point of view, and motives and values of characters as way of building insight into the varieties of human experience and perspectives.
- Mount an argument with supporting evidence that takes into account and responds to possible competing positions.

- Show creativity: link disparate things or ideas in the service of solving a problem, or making something easier to understand, or just enriching our experience with something interestingly new.

- Persevere in the face of difficulty.]

Encourage teachers to assign homework, rather than dedicate time in the class period for students to complete independent homework-styled work, thereby lengthening the time available for group work and teacher-facilitated instruction. Use lack of homework completion as a way of identifying families who may need help aligning home time with academic needs. Institute a stepped response to failure to return timely homework, with teachers communicating with students for the first and second late assignments, for example, and with parents for the third to discuss and set up a remediation plan. If there's a lack of progress with this plan, have home school coordinators and other staff contact parents

and work with them to identify and resolve barriers to completing homework -- similar to what is done in cases of truancy. What is done outside of school is so important to academic success, so Hackett should be encouraged to respond quickly and comprehensively to signs of a lack of time outside of school being devoted to academics.

From: Susan D'Entremont sdentny@gmail.com

- Under Educational Plan, iii, recommendation 1 re additional literacy and math tutors. I think this is a good recommendation. However, there is a danger of having too many tutors coming in and out of the school without longevity. This has happened in district schools in the past and ends up not having as strong of an effect as more consistent tutors. Besides being "supervised by the District," I would like the District to get some other sort of commitment - maybe a contract, paying tutors, or making sure the tutors are getting college credit - something to ensure that the tutors are serious and consistent.
 - Overall concern - the year in which recommendations will be implemented. Most of the recommendations are listed as being implemented in 2015-2016. I would love to have most of these recommendations in place right now as I think they will have a positive impact on the students and the school as a whole. However, the practical side of implementing new approaches and policies often means a lot of work, planning, and rethinking by staff. I am worried that we are throwing too much (and too much change at once) on their plates, which may lead to the strategies being less effective than they could be or even ineffective. Also, I think faculty and staff buy-in will be stronger if recommendations are implemented on a more gradual basis. Once they are confident with a few of the recommendations, they will be more willing and able to effectively implement more.
 - Overall concern - "Recommendations for Consideration by Union/School Leadership" - The CET pulled 7 recommendations from consideration because they do not fall under the current union contract(s). While I understand the reasoning behind this decision, I disagree with it. One of the few opportunities receivership offers a school is that the receiver is not bound by the union contract. The contract should not be disregarded willy-nilly, but there may be cases where the union contract provisions are severely impacting the ability of the school to improve. All of the seven recommendations that were put aside could improve the school, but two especially jumped out at me as having a strong impact. The two are:
 - Ensure that the building principal has the authority needed to oversee academics and ensure a well-functioning school (e.g. require professional development; relieve underperforming staff of their positions).
 - Establish a school-wide policy for make-up work due dates, including providing support to parents of students who routinely fail to complete make-up assignments. - the second part of this recommendation, reaching out to parents whose kids are not making up assignments, is the most compelling to me and may not even be a union contract issue. It could fall under the section on parent/family involvement.
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From: Sam Shipherd shersam6@yahoo.com

Recommendations for the Minority Report

Change Common Planning Time from five days to two days a week. Use remaining three days for additional small group intensive instruction.

Provide consistent adult presence after school at dismissal at both the back as well as the front of the building.

Enforce Albany School District dress code

Require school staff to role model appropriate dress code.

Require Hall Monitors to role model appropriate behavior (e.g. Speak calmly and with correct grammar. When sitting at their hallway desks during class – Model academic behavior and read a book. No texting and surfing on web during the school day.)

Do not tolerate foul language from the students.

TRAINING, SUPPORT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Conduct mandatory Professional Development at times that are outside of the instructional day.

Ensure that the building principal has the tools needed to oversee academics and ensure a well-functioning school (e.g. review of lesson plans a week before class, unannounced class visits) (Originally recommended in Section ii instructional strategies Recommendation 1)

Establish a School-wide policy for make-up work due dates, including providing support to parents of students who routinely fail to complete make-up assignments. (Originally recommended in Section ii instructional strategies Recommendation 11)

Establish a School-wide grading policy that accurately reflects students' progress in learning. (Current policy does not assign failing grades, (despite failing work) in the first part of the school year.) (Originally recommended in Section ii instructional strategies Recommendation 12)

Hold Studio Classroom training outside of the regular class sessions (e.g. Friday PD; summer). (Originally recommended in Section ii instructional strategies Recommendation 19)

Ensure that the building principal has the authority needed to oversee academics and ensure a well-functioning school (e.g. require professional development; relieve under-performing staff of their positions.) (Originally recommended in Section ii instructional strategies Recommendation 20)
